

By MICHAEL PARKS

Moscow: Bureau of The Sun

Moscow—The United States has reportedly dropped its demand that the Soviet Union permit American observers at peaceful underground nuclear explosions here as a condition of the recently negotiated treaty restricting the underground testing of nuclear weapons.

The U.S. is now willing to settle for a compromise that limits the number of peaceful underground nuclear explosions in both countries and requires an extensive exchange of data before and after each

blast, according to informed sources here.

Some American officials still hope that the Soviet Union will agree to the presence of "scientific observers" at the peaceful explosions, but the Soviet Union is firmly opposed to any sort of "on-site inspection" and has forced the U.S. to retreat on this issue, the sources said.

Soviet and American negotiators have been discussing a supplementary agreement to the limited underground test-ban signed at the Moscow summit in July. The agreement would cover peaceful un-

derground nuclear explosions; the treaty bans military tests equivalent to more than 150,000 tons.

The American negotiators are trying to save the treaty from being scuttled by the Senate when it comes to a ratification vote by concluding a tough agreement on peaceful explosions that will pacify both liberal and conservative critics of the test-ban treaty.

The talks are now in recess until January as negotiators consult with their governments about possible compromises. The issue may arise during the summit meeting at Vladivostok this weekend between President Ford and Leonid I. Brezhnev, the Soviet Communist party leader, although it is not on the agenda.

Shortly after taking office, President Ford approved a decision to press Moscow hard on the whole question of the peaceful underground explosions, particularly to follow up the issue of on-site inspection.

Henry A. Kissinger, U.S. Secretary of State, said at the end of the Moscow summit in July that the Soviet Union had agreed "in principle" for the first time to accept on-site inspection as part of the still-to-be negotiated agreement on peaceful explosions.

Soviet spokesmen shortly afterward rejected the idea of on-site inspection whatever the circumstances, and Soviet sources here said this week that Moscow's position "has not changed and will not change."

The Ford administration is described by knowledgeable sources as "extremely anxious" for an agreement—even if it means losing that small

step forward of on-site inspection," in the words of one specialist from Washington—in order to preserve the test-ban treaty itself.

Dr. Kissinger and the administration feels it will be a real setback to both arms control and Soviet-American relations if the treaty is rejected by the Senate or if it never goes into effect because the President does not submit it because the votes are not there," an American specialist on strategic arms and arms control from Washington said.

The Ford administration estimated early this fall that the treaty would certainly be defeated if proposed for ratification without the companion agreement on peaceful explosions because of opposition from liberals who say that it is far too weak to restrict the arms race effectively and from conservatives who oppose any limitation.

The issue of the monitoring of peaceful nuclear explosions is regarded by the Ford administration, according to sources familiar with the negotiations here, as important, for it ensures that they are not used to hide weapons tests.

The Soviet Union has set off more than 30 presumed nuclear explosions in the last seven years in areas away from its usual nuclear weapons test sites.

American scientists monitoring the Soviet atomic energy program believe that the Russians have perfected the use of nuclear explosions for engineering purposes to the point of "routine industrial technology" in some applications.

While American efforts in the Plowshare program have concentrated on developing natural gas fields, the Soviet Union has pressed a more diversified effort, including canal excavation, the sealing of run-away gas wells, the stimulation of oil-field flows and the creation of underground storage reservoirs for oil and gas. Nuclear explosions are believed to have been used in recent years in the Soviet project to divert Siberian rivers into central Asia huge canals.

For this reason, the Soviet Union has resisted any limits on the peaceful uses of nuclear explosions in the talks here, according to informed sources, but might eventually agree to a numerical limitation with an exchange of data before and

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